



Southeast Louisiana Refuges Complex

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Spring 2004 Newsletter and Calendar of Events

Celebrating Breton National Wildlife Refuge's 100th Birthday

On October 4, 1904 President Theodore Roosevelt created Breton National Wildlife Refuge in the Chandeleur island chain by executive order. Only the day before he had received a report from the president of the Audubon Society detailing how as many as 50,000 eggs of terns, skimmers, and gulls had been taken from the islands to use in making glue, and that market hunters had plans to take 2-3,000 waterfowl from the islands for shipment through Mobile.

Always a man of action, TR responded right away and set aside the "Breton Island Reservation" to protect the wildlife of the islands. It was the second area of its kind established, after Pelican Island in Florida the year before. By the end of Roosevelt's term as President, over 50 refuges had been established, and they formed the nucleus of what is now a national system of over 500 refuges that protect almost 100 million acres of wildlife habitat in all 50 states.

After he left office, Roosevelt accepted an invitation to visit Breton refuge in 1915, where he observed that the nests of the "five chief birds, the royal terns, Caspian terns, Cabot's terns, laughing gulls, and skimmers" had increased from about 1,000 in 1904 to over 35,000 by 1915. He noted that brown pelicans, Louisiana herons, and least terns were also showing a marked increase in numbers.

Roosevelt ended his account of his Breton visit with these words:

"And to lose the chance to see frigate-birds soaring in circles above the storm, or a file of pelicans winging their way homeward across the crimson afterglow of the sunset, or a myriad terns flashing in the bright light of midday as they hover in a shifting maze above the beach - why, the loss is like the loss of a gallery of the masterpieces of the artists of old time."

We're proud to say that visitors can still enjoy these sights at Breton National Wildlife Refuge. We have lots of things planned during 2004 to celebrate the refuge's centennial, including a recreation of Roosevelt's Breton visit, special showings of artwork done at Breton by noted artist Walter Anderson, restoration projects that will involve students and others in hands-on work to preserve the island's habitats, and special exhibits and commemorative events. Stay tuned for details!



President Theodore Roosevelt on a visit to Breton in June, 1915

Two Projects Aim to Restore Wetlands at Big Branch Marsh

Two wetland restoration projects are planned for Big Branch Marsh that will restore degraded coastal wetland habitats.

The largest project is the **Goose Point/Point Platte Marsh Creation**, which will use dredged material from Lake Pontchartrain to fill open water ponds in the marsh and to maintain shoreline integrity by filling in cuts along the lake shoreline. The goal is to create 437 acres of "emergent marsh" and counter the effects of saltwater intrusion and ponding in interior marshes, which has
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Wetlands Restoration, cont.

led to marsh plant degradation. Ponding occurs when wave energy begins to eat away at the shoreline of interior ponds, gradually enlarging and deepening them.

This project has been approved for funding under the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act, also known as the Breaux Act. A range of projects is selected each year that aim to address pervasive coastal land loss problems in Louisiana. The total cost of this project is expected to be around 20 million dollars.

A smaller and more "low tech" project is the **Point Platte Wetland Restoration Project**, funded through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, and St. Tammany Parish, with the cooperation of the Friends of Louisiana Wildlife Refuges, Inc. This project aims to create 10-15 acres of vegetated wetlands and to stabilize and protect 3,200 yards of shoreline through the use of "soft structures" such as Christmas trees and hay bales to slow wave action and trap sediment. The labor will be performed by FWS staff, Friends group members, and other community and student groups. Total project cost is around \$42,000.

These projects and many more will be needed to stem the loss of wetlands across coastal Louisiana. Visit these web sites for more information:

Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana -

<http://www.crcl.org/>

America's Wetland -

<http://www.americaswetland.com/>

Teacher Expo to be Held at Six Flags Mar. 27

All teachers come to Six Flags! On Saturday March 27th the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and Audubon Louisiana Nature Center will present the second annual Building Bridges Teachers Expo. This year it is being held at Six Flags New Orleans, where teachers will get in free and can bring guests for a reduced park admission price.

The expo highlights the huge array of field trips and activities available to teachers in the metro area that they can use to help educate their students. Last year the House of Blues, Audubon Zoo, historic homes, art museums, and many more presented sessions about the programs they offer and gave lessons that teachers could take back to school with them. This year even more presenters are expected, so please come and be part of the fun. We will be highlighting all of our environmental education programs for Bayou Sauvage and Big Branch Marsh refuges. For more information about the expo contact the Louisiana Nature Center at 504-378-4113 or check it out on the web at: <http://www.buildingbridgesexpo.org>



"Back to the Bayou" Slated for May 8 at Bayou Sauvage

This family event at Bayou Sauvage will focus on wildlife-related recreation on the refuge and include birding, canoeing, and bike tours, along with some "behind-the-scenes" looks at what Bayou Sauvage has to offer. We will be partnering with area wildlife conservation and outdoor recreation folks to provide our visitors with a first-hand look at Bayou Sauvage wildlife and habitat. This is a great chance for beginners to meet refuge staff and area conservation groups and learn about ways to enjoy this great urban wildlife refuge. Visitors will begin their visit at I-10 East, Exit 251; from 9 am until 4 pm, and will be directed to sites and activities all around the refuge. For more info: (985) 882-2000.

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